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HEALTH
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BOROUGH OF TAUNTON.

Public Health and School Medical
Department,
St. Paul's House,
Taunton.

18th September 1944.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health
for the year 1943.

This is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Health Circular 10/44 and omits details which may enable any reconstruction of population figures.

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS.

Birth Rate	- total	16.8
" "	- live	16.0
" "	- still	0.78
" "	- illegitimate	1.08
Death Rate	- crude	12.7
Infant Mortality Rate	- total	28.5
" " "	- legitimate	20.4
" " "	- illegitimate	133.3
Death Rate (per 1000 births) from Diarrhoea in infants under 2 years of age.		2.0

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES.

This was similar to 1942 and included for:-
Maternity and Child Welfare

An Ante-Natal Clinic in temporary premises at North Street Sunday School, on Monday and Wednesday afternoons 211 expectant mothers attended and 4 attended for examination after the birth of the child, while 43 mothers who had booked a midwife for their confinement were referred to a doctor for further examination.

OBSTETRIC CONSULTANT.

This service was provided at the request of the doctor attending for 24 mothers, seven of these were visited by the consultant at their homes and seventeen were able to attend the consultant. A brief report on the conditions found and treatment advised is now supplied by the consultant.

HOME HELPS.

These were provided for 4 mothers. It is at present almost impossible to obtain suitable women to act in this capacity either through the Ministry of Labour or voluntary agencies although the rate of pay offered is equal to that paid to women doing part time work.

MATERNITY HOME, 10 beds.

The total number of women admitted was 208 including 6 specially admitted for ante-natal care, while with the co-operation of the Somerset County Council, 3 women who could not be admitted owing to lack of room were sent to the Emergency Maternity Unit at Tetton House, Kingston.

COMPLICATED MATERNITY CASES.

Sixty five mothers were admitted from the Borough to the Taunton and Somerset Hospital for complications of pregnancy.

INFANT WELFARE CENTRE.

Three sessions are held each week, two being at North Street Sunday School on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and one at Halcon Chapel on Wednesday afternoons. Total consultations numbered 3,579 with 422 new infants brought for consultation. Many mothers in adjacent country districts particularly those evacuated from other areas have brought their children owing to lack of similar facilities in the county area, and these have been seen as far as circumstances permit.

WORK OF THE HEALTH VISITORS.

There are three Health Visitors who also act as child life protection visitors and give about half their time to these duties, and the other half as school nurses. They paid 282 visits to expectant mothers, 2,722 visits to children under one year of age and 2,845 visits to children between the age of 1 & 5 years. Nurse Lakeman resigned on the 15th March and was succeeded by Nurse Richardson who commenced duty on 19th April.

PUERPERAL PYREXIA.

The rate of cases notified per 1,000 births (live and still) was 23.3, as compared with 9.2 for England and Wales. Special arrangements are available for the treatment of these when necessary in the Isolation Hospital.

DISTRIBUTION OF FRUIT JUICES AND COD LIVER OIL.

The engagement of a paid part-time helper to distribute these essential products has continued and they are available at North Street Sunday School on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings, and at Halcon Chapel on Wednesday afternoons. There is an increased distribution of these owing to the alterations in the system and many mothers from country districts find it more convenient to come here for these.

WAR TIME DAY NURSERY.

There has been an increased demand for accommodation here, but the Ministry have not agreed to any extension and there is a long waiting list for admission. It serves a very useful purpose and is of very great advantage to the children attending. They are all examined at least once a month. No child is admitted unless the mother is working.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

Water Supply.

A continuous and chlorinated supply was maintained throughout the year. Samples for bacteriological examination in the ~~in the~~ laboratory of the Somerset County Council were taken at least once a week and the residual chlorine checked.

Food Preparation.

With the co-operation of the Food Executive Officer it has been possible to obtain particulars of all restaurants, Cafes, Snack Bars, etc., and visits to some of these have disclosed very unsatisfactory conditions. I consider that there is need for the registration of such premises with the Health Authority and that no new premises should be allowed to open until inspection has shown them to be satisfactory.

PASTEURIZED MILK. was produced from two premises and samples of the milk sold were taken at least once each week to check the efficiency of the process. The results have not been altogether satisfactory. In order to effect economy in man power and petrol consumption a scheme for the rationalization of distribution of all milk was put into force on 1st December 1942.

NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The notification rates per 1,000 and the comparable figures for similar towns in England and Wales were:-

	Taunton. per 1,000 population	Similar Towns. per 1,000 population.
Typhoid	-	0.02
Para typhoid	-	0.01
Cerebro-spinal Fever	0.16	0.06
Scarlet Fever	1.41	3.54
Whooping Cough	1.50	2.25
Diphtheria	0.82	0.77
Erysipelas	0.23	0.27
Measles	16.04	9.77
Pneumonia	0.36	1.16

DIPHTHERIA IMMUNISATION.

This is available free either by a private doctor for children under 8 years of age or to all children under 14 years at the School Clinic on Saturday mornings. It was estimated at the end of December that 66.4% of the child population under 5 years of age and 68% of the child population aged 5 - 15 years had received protection. It was not possible to test the efficacy of the process by Schick testing owing to shortage of staff.

SCABIES.

This contagious disease which causes very considerable discomfort shows little or no diminution and while the present conditions of gross overcrowding continue it is hopeless to expect much reduction. A centre for the out-patient treatment has been opened by the Somerset County Council since

8th June at Belmont Sick Bay, Haines Hill, and is available for women and children from 2-4 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons and for adult males on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. All medical practitioners in the area were informed and cases only receive treatment if sent with a note to the effect that they have Scabies., while close contacts of these are advised to attend for prophylactic treatment consisting of a bath and the application of benzyl benzoate emulsion.

PEDICULOSIS.

There has been an increase in the number of children found to have verminous heads in school, and in some recalcitrant cases proceedings have been taken against the parents under the Bye - Laws of the Education Committee.

John Allen

Medical Officer of Health
and School Medical Officer.